

Westland Wessex (XT604, XT480 and XS876)



Specifications

Dimensions:

Main Rotor diameter: 17.07m (56ft)

Length overall (Rotors turning):
24.04m (65ft 9in)

Height: 4.93m (16ft 2in)

Powerplant: Two Rolls Royce (Bristol Siddley)
Gnome Mk 110/111 turboshafts

Maximum Speed: 132 mph (at sea level)

Hovering Ceiling: 1,220m (4,000ft)

Range: 769km (478 miles)

Developed by Westland after the turboshaft powered success of the Whirlwind, the Wessex is a licence built variant of the American Sikorsky S-58. Westland believed that the larger airframe, combined with a turboshaft powerplant would make the helicopter ideal for the ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) role for the Royal Navy.

Following the arrival of an S-58 from the USA, Westland began by replacing the standard Wright R-1820 piston engine with a Napier Gazelle NGa turboshaft unit and the aircraft in its new Westland (UK) form flew for the first time on 17th May 1957. This machine then became the company demonstrator. Satisfactory testing took place which led to the first Westland built prototype and two pre-production machines of what was to be named Wessex.

Over the next few years the Wessex developed through a series of improvements to become the 'Real Workhorse' for both the Royal Air Force & The Royal Navy and other airforces around the world including Australia, Uruguay, Brunei and Ghana. In addition the Wessex was selected by the Royal Squadron (formally the Queen's Flight) to serve in the important and prestigious role of transporting the Monarch and members of the Royal Family around the UK. A role which they performed without mishap for close on 29 years. In total the Wessex fleet for the Royal Squadron notched up around 11,000 hours.

The five main variants of the Wessex are as follows:-

HAS. Mk1. (130 built for the Royal Navy as submarine hunter killers)

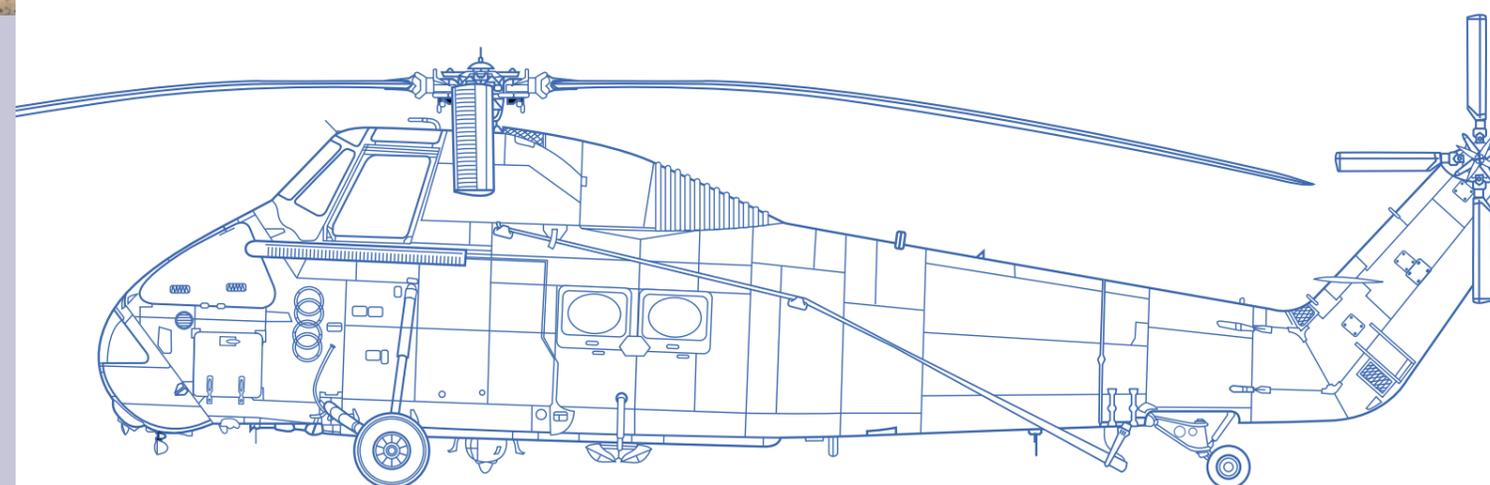
HC. Mk2. (for RAF deployment, in ambulance, rescue, transport and utility roles with the important difference of having two coupled Gnome turboshaft engines interconnected. In the event of an engine failure the remaining engine could continue to power the rotors).

HAS. Mk3 Introduced for the Royal Navy with the more powerful Gazelle NGa22 engine. This variant also featured the AFCS system that allowed the helicopter to be flown from lift-off to positioning for landing, automatically.

HC. Mk4 VIP transports similar to the HC.Mk2 for the Queen's Flight.

HU.Mk5 Again similar to the HC.Mk2, a troop carrying assault helicopter for the Royal Marine Commandos.

A civil version designated Wessex Mk 60 is similar to the HC.Mk2 and was used extensively on off-shore oil transportation work.



The Aeropark Wessex

Wessex HC.Mk2 (XT604). This aircraft was built in 1966 and operated with 103, 78 (Bahrain) and 228 Squadron at RAF Chiviner, Valley and finally at RAF Finningley on the Notts/Yorkshire border. Its final flight was on the 6th December 1995 to RNAY Fleetlands for storage. XT604 was purchased by AVA member Mark Lindsey, arriving at the Aeropark on the 11th July 2002.

